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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.

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Statement

1. The trauma throughout the world is graphically evidenced in the flight from rural areas to foreign cities, and the subsequent growth of immigrant detention camps, city slums, and prisons. Wars, economic crises, and corruption combine to drive millions into the lowest levels of physical, mental, and psychological insecurity.

2. Who are those so confined and imprisoned, and what are their needs? They are, for the most part: persons living in poverty, often with poor education and poor job training, making their economic survival difficult. Many, as a result of precarious living, may also suffer from addictions to alcohol or drugs. Instability may further result in family dysfunction, neglect and/or abuse, mental illness, depression, and socially disabling diseases like AIDS. Concentrations of those thus socially disabled are high in some detention camps, higher in many slums and ghettos, and very high in most prisons. Prisons and slums, moreover, are both breeding grounds for unrest, violence, and crime, and feed each other in these matters. Magnitudes of persons in these centres are estimated to be 9.8 million prisoners worldwide, hundreds of millions in our slums, supplying the prisons, and more millions in detention camps.

3. World social health and security can be significantly enhanced by the social development and social reintegration of many of the millions of excluded, abandoned, and ostracized persons in immigration camps, slums, and prisons around the world, providing rehabilitation and successful re-entry rather than making these places of detention into places of social degeneration.

4. One important focus now is on improving the small farm agriculture process. Migration from rural areas has swelled the immigration camps and the slums of major cities, and hence contributed to the growth of our prisons. Yet, many countries are dependent on the production from small farms. This has often been relatively inefficient, but can be substantially increased by modest training in good farming practice and supportive agribusiness. Agricultural training centres can provide experienced consultations and opportunities for interns to learn by doing. Subjects can include good seed, fertilizer, harvesting, water supply and water usage, and agribusiness practices like produce storage, distribution, and marketing. The crisis in our detention centres, slums and prisons can therefore be eased by giving migrants from farms and others a new path to productive employment and dignity.

5. Agricultural training centres can be an important part of prisons where inmates can learn how to reintegrate into society. Produce from these training centres can help the destitute and lessen the costs of prisons and food aid centres. Agricultural training centres can also be established near slums of big cities, so as to attract not only current farmers but also the very poor in detention centres and slums, who would return to their farm environment if they had the promise of a good income. Decent work, such as farm production that is profitable and sustainable, can be key to trauma reduction and decent living.

6. Agricultural training centres should be an important part of a broader plan for education and vocational training for decent work and decent living. Good wages should be paid for meaningful service, and jobs should not be simply field work. Newer, low-cost technologies, such as DVDs and training via the Internet can supplement that education process.

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7. Spreading restorative justice and dignity, through the social development and social integration of many millions of excluded and ostracized persons in the world's detention centres, slums and prisons can result in easing the food crisis, and contribute to better social health and more national productivity. It can reduce unrest and crime, and lower total costs for police, judiciary, detention centres, jails, prisons, and welfare.

Note: Statement also endorsed and supported by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a NGO in consultative status with the Council.